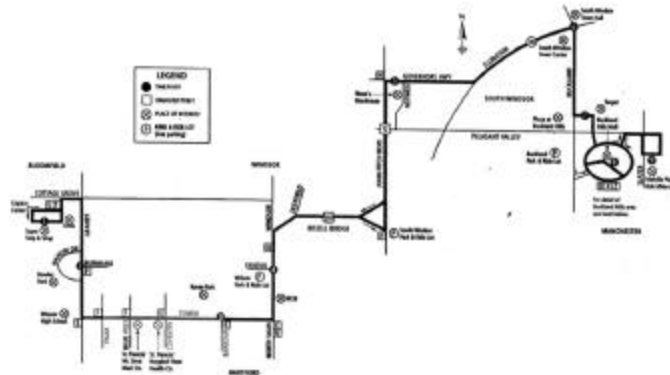


**TOWER AVENUE CROSSTOWN**  
Copaco/Buckland Mall  
Routes  
L1 Buckland Hills Mall  
L2 Copaco

Effective: April 15, 2001



## L-Tower Avenue Bus Route

serving the towns of Bloomfield, Hartford, Manchester,  
South Windsor, and Windsor

## Saving A Route that WORKS!

A Report on Transit and Food Access by  
The City of Hartford Advisory  
Commission on Food Policy



## **Issue: Food Access in North Hartford**

The L-Tower Avenue bus route, operated by CTTransit, is critical to food access for Hartford residents. Currently funded by temporary sources, the L-Tower Avenue route faces an uncertain future unless it becomes a permanently funded route of the CTTransit system.

The City of Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy is concerned about transit access for Hartford's residents. Transportation plays a critical role in food access, and as such, is one of the issues regularly monitored by the Food Policy Commission. The Commission strongly supported the establishment of this route in August 2000, knowing that many of Hartford's residents rely on mass transit. In particular, access to WIC clinics, shopping and job opportunities were major concerns. CTTransit responded positively to the public's need for convenient transportation to shopping and services by establishing this route. The results have been impressive. Ridership increased over 100% during its first year of operation (from 4,978 passengers in September to 10,349 passengers in August). This route makes direct cross-town access to a major supermarket possible for many city residents.

Despite its resounding success, the L-Tower Avenue route has been cut back to hourly service as of November 2001 in order to stretch out remaining Jobs Access funds to keep the route in service. CTTransit and the CT Department of Transportation have been unable to allocate permanent funding to this route. The future fate of the L-Tower Avenue route is uncertain.

### **Background:**

In 2000, state and federal money for welfare reform was used through the Jobs Access program in CT to create a bus route to serve the north end of Hartford, linking residents with important opportunities such as jobs, shopping, and medical care. The Jobs Access program, administered by the Capital Region Council of Governments, is committed to keeping the route in service and succeeded in stretching funds available for 2000-2001 by cutting back service from every forty minutes to hourly, starting in November 2001. This is a temporary fix.

The success of the L-Tower Avenue route is reflected in the ridership numbers:

- CTTransit's L-Tower Avenue bus has had a successful first year. **Ridership increased over 100%** during its first year of operation (from 4,978 passengers in September to 10,349 passengers in August!).
- The L-Tower Avenue route was highlighted in CT-Transit's Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2001. "The L-route is an especially important addition to the CTTransit system because it responds directly to our strategic goals, market research recommendations, and the Hartford regional transportation strategy...the ability for North End residents to access employment, shopping, and medical services without requiring a transfer downtown **represents a major improvement in the quality of public transit service.**" (p.4)
- The L-Tower Avenue bus route is an important link between the populous North End of Hartford and major employment, shopping, and medical service centers.

### **Public Response**

Despite an initial letter from CTTransit regarding the tenuous funding status of the L-Tower Avenue route, there has been little public outcry regarding the possible termination or downsizing of this route. The Commission has contacted several neighborhood groups and local legislators, alerting them to the concerns for permanent funding. The Commission decided that hearing from the bus riders themselves would be especially important.

Thanks to the energy of four Trinity College students, over 150 L-Tower Avenue route bus riders were surveyed during the fall of 2001 for the purposes of:

1. determining the impact (esp. related to food access) of changes to or possible termination of the L-Tower Avenue route
2. creating public awareness of the threat to the L-Tower Avenue route
3. identifying possible grassroots support for continued funding.

Significant findings include (full survey results attached):

- The majority of respondents to the survey take the L-Tower Avenue route daily (67%) or more than twice a week (20%).
- Over 51% take the bus for transportation to employment, with grocery shopping being the next most likely reason for taking the bus (33%).
- About a third of bus riders reported that a change to hourly service would increase their transit time.
- Nearly 70% reported that they would have to go downtown and transfer if the L-Tower Avenue route were terminated. Such a change would add a minimum of 45 minutes up to an hour and a half to their commute.
- The majority of riders (62%) felt uncertain about what could be done to save this bus route.

How L-Tower Avenue bus riders feel:

*People Depend On This Route:*

- “This bus is convenient to lots of people; if you stop it, it’s like chopping off people’s heads”
- “I probably couldn’t get to my job without this bus.”

*Many More People Could Ride this Route:*

- “Increase awareness about the bus—lots of people find it by accident”

*The Area is Safer with the Bus:*

- “Tower Avenue has no sidewalks. Last year someone was hit by a car walking down it—it’s not safe.”

*Not Only Riders Are Affected:*

- “The route change also affects drivers; because there are fewer hours, pay is cut.”

## **Conclusion**

CTTransit said it best when it quoted an L-Tower Avenue bus rider: “You saved my job—no transportation—no work. I just love the L Crosstown from Copaco to Buckland Mall. This line has been a lifesaver”.(p. 4, CTTransit Annual Report 2001) **The City of Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy calls for permanent funding to continue and restore the L-Tower Avenue service.** This is a bus route that WORKS for working people. The people of Hartford deserve no less.

## ***Crosstown Route in Hartford Exemplifies Excellence in Planning***

In August 2000, CTTRANSIT launched a new crosstown bus route in Hartford, only our second all-new local-bus route in a generation. The L-Tower Avenue route runs from the Copaco Shopping Center in Bloomfield, through the populous North End neighborhoods of Hartford, past major community centers such as Bowles Park, Weaver High School, and the St. Francis/Mt. Sinai Medical Center, to major employment centers in South Windsor and the Buckland Hills retail area.

The L-route is an especially important addition to the CTTRANSIT system because it responds directly to our strategic goals, market research recommendations, and the Hartford regional transportation strategy. While CTTRANSIT's Hartford Division system will continue to focus on downtown as the principal hub for regional bus service, the ability for North End residents to access employment, shopping, and medical services without requiring a transfer downtown represents a major improvement in the quality of public transit service.

Several community organizations, designated the "Northside Committee", were directly involved in every aspect of planning the L-route service, in order to ensure that it would immediately succeed in attracting new ridership. Funding to implement the new service

was provided through the regional Access to Jobs program, administered through the Capitol Region Council of Governments.

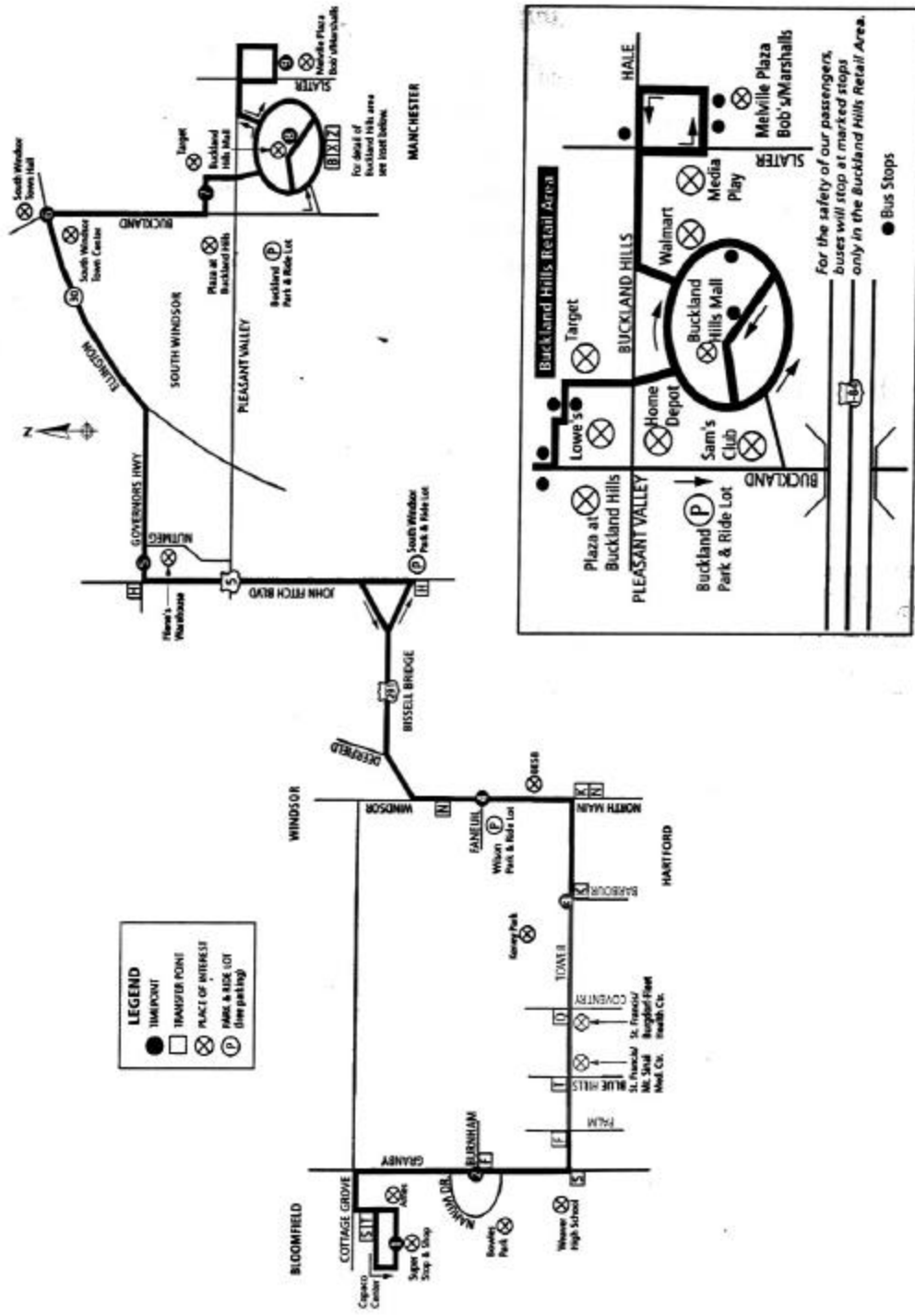
The best measure of the success of the L-route has been the customer response. From its first full month of service in September 2000 through May 2001, ridership increased 84% to 9,150 monthly customers. By way of comparison, CTTRANSIT's other crosstown route, the X-Forbes Street (primarily serving "east-of-the-river" communities) had gained barely half that number of riders during its first nine months when introduced in 1996.

A Hartford passenger recently used an on-board survey card to let CTTRANSIT know how the L-Tower Avenue Crosstown had impacted her life. The woman noted "you saved my job—no transportation—no work" and went on to exclaim "I just love the 'L' Crosstown from Copaco to Buckland Mall. This line has been a lifesaver." As

employment opportunities continue to develop along the L-route, this newest element of the Hartford regional bus system will become an increasingly important model for future service enhancement.



**Effective: April 15, 2001**





# CITY OF HARTFORD

## ADVISORY COMMISSION ON FOOD POLICY

c/o The Hartford Food System, 509 Wethersfield Avenue, Hartford, CT 06114  
Phone: 860.296.9325 Fax: 860.296.8326 email: info@hartfordfood.org

### Commissioners

*Jackee Bryant*  
Hartford Elderly Services

*Joan Dauber*  
St. Francis Outpatient Nutrition

*Susan Davis*  
Hartford Public Schools

*Lola Elliott-Hugh*  
Salvation Army

*Anir Gonzalez*  
Hispanic Health Council

*Jack Hale*  
Knox Parks Foundation

*Butch Hollister*  
ConnFARM

*Roger Ladd*  
Roger Ladd Real Estate

*Gloria McAdam*  
Foodshare

*Rev. Gary Miller*  
Asylum Hill Congregational  
Church

*Luverne Mott*  
Kennelly School

*Millicent Wilson*  
Hartford Neighborhood Center

*Mark Winne*  
Hartford Food System

### Ex Officio Members

*Elpidio Sanchez*  
WIC Program

*Jackee Bryant*  
Hartford Dept. of Human  
Services

The Hartford Food Policy Commission wants to know how schedule changes to this bus route would affect current riders. Would you answer a few questions?

1. Did you know that this bus route might lose its funding and have to cut hours or stop altogether? 6 (10.5%) YES 136 (89.5%) NO

2. How often do you take this bus route?

102 (66.7%) Daily  
30 (19.6%) More than two days a week  
13 (18.5%) Once a week  
8 (5.2%) Monthly

3. Why are you riding the bus today? (more than one response)

80 (51%) Job  
31 (19.7%) Other Shopping  
21 (13.4%) Grocery  
21 (13.4%) Other/School  
4 (2.5%) Medical appt

Is this the reason you usually ride this route? 115 (76%) YES  
34 (22%) NO  
3 ( 2%) No Ans.

If NO, Why do you usually ride this route? (more than one response)

30 (33%) Grocery  
21 (23%) Other shopping  
19 (21%) Job  
14 (16%) Medical appt  
6 (7%) Other/School

4. How does the change to hourly bus service (instead of every 40 minutes) affect you?

47 (31%) Longer Transit Time  
44 (29%) Doesn't Matter  
34 (23%) Get Up Earlier  
7 (5%) Get Home Later

5. How would you get to where you need to go if this bus route were not available?

104 (69%) Downtown and Transfer

18 (12%) Get Home Later

14 (9%) Catch a Ride

10 (7%) Don't Know

6. What do you think we can do to try to save this bus route?

67 (62%) Don't Know

6 (6%) Publicize the Bus Line

3 (3%) Contact Businesses

1 (1%) Contact Community Group

Do you want to be included in our effort?

YES 15

NO

No Answer 146

Are you a member of a neighborhood group, church or other group that would be interested in saving this bus route?

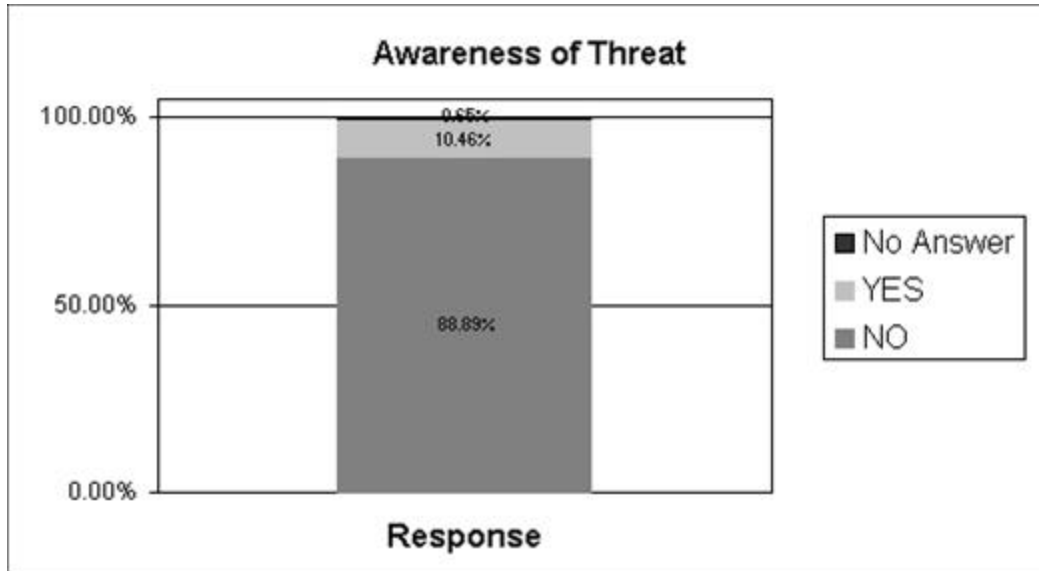
Organization Name:

Americorps

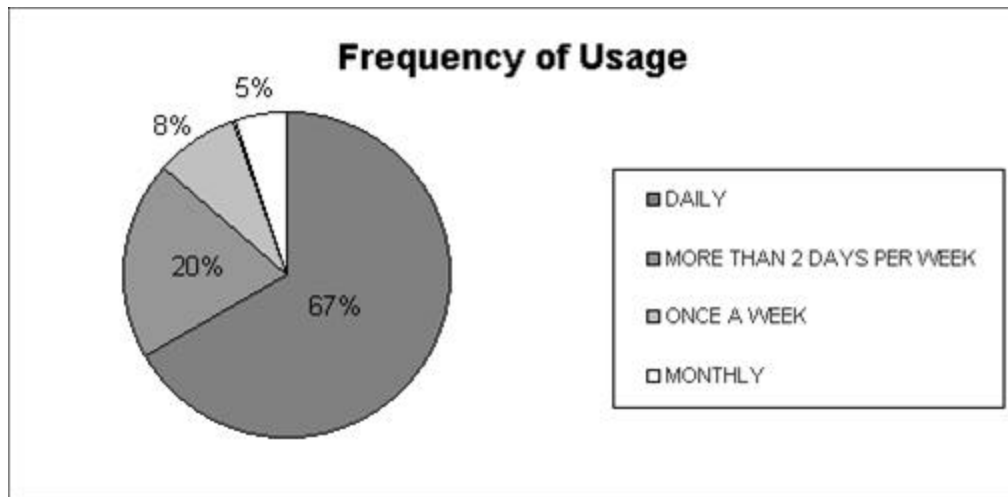
CT Council for the Blind

St. Michael's Church

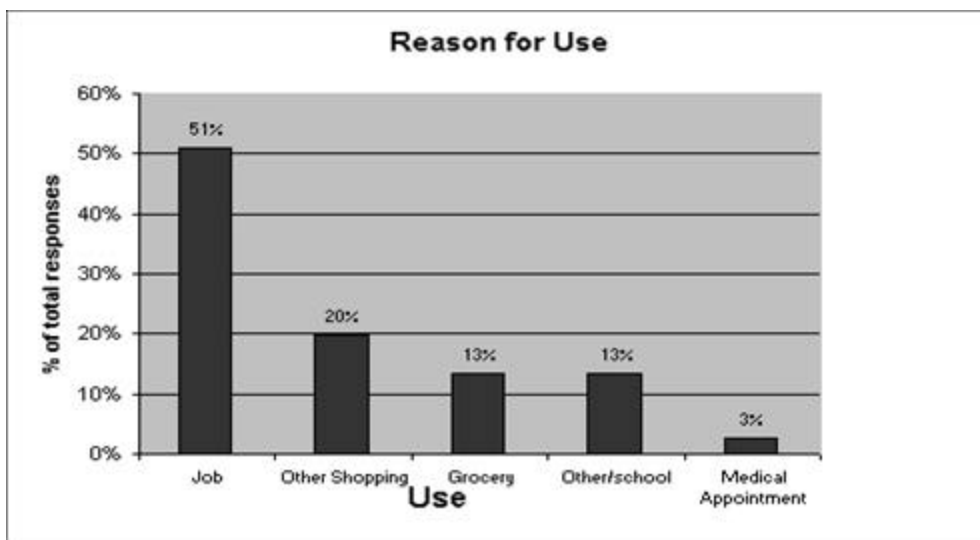
Question #1: Did you know that this bus route might lost its funding and have to cut hours or stop altogether?



Question #2: How often do you ride this bus route?

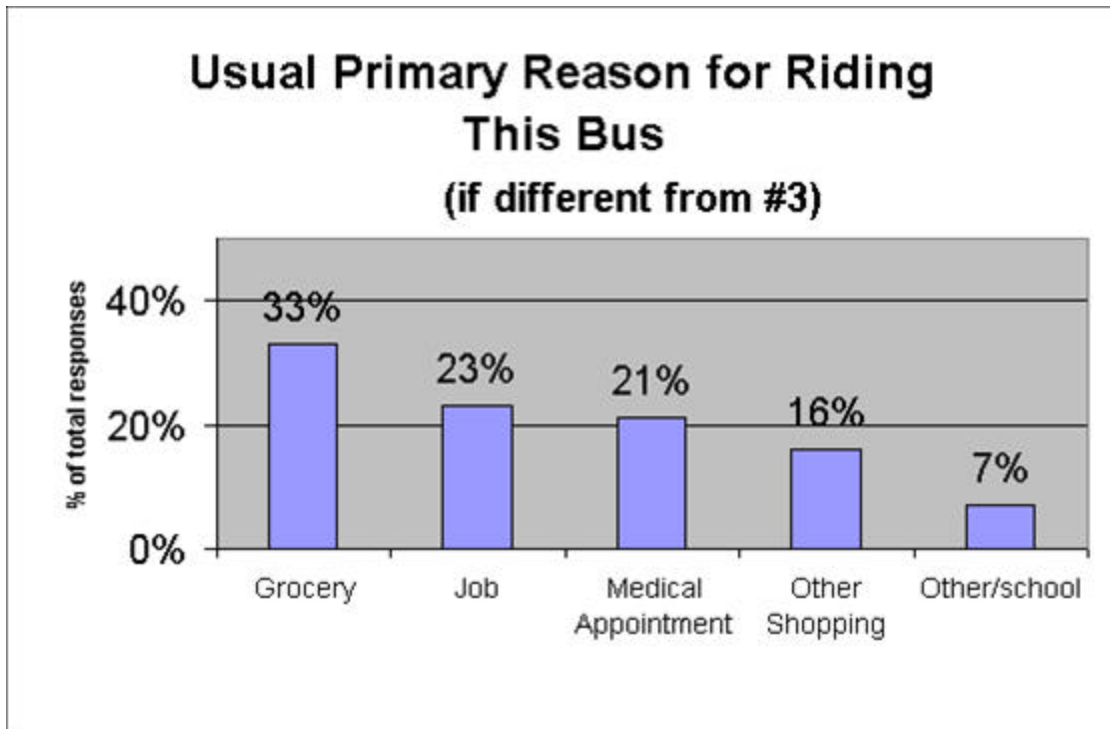


Question 3: Why are you riding the bus today?

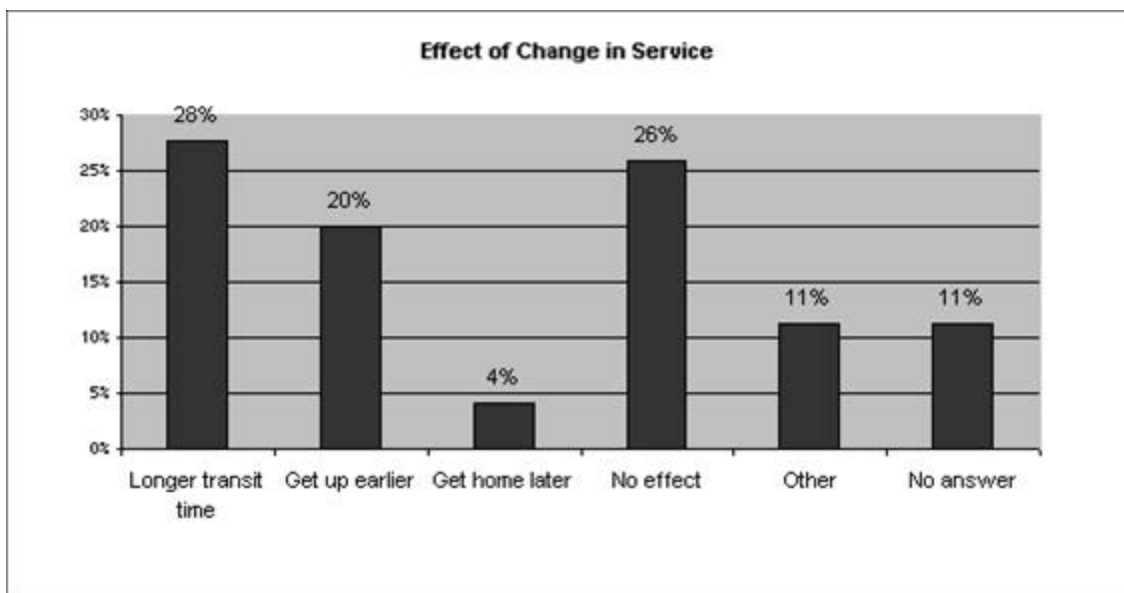




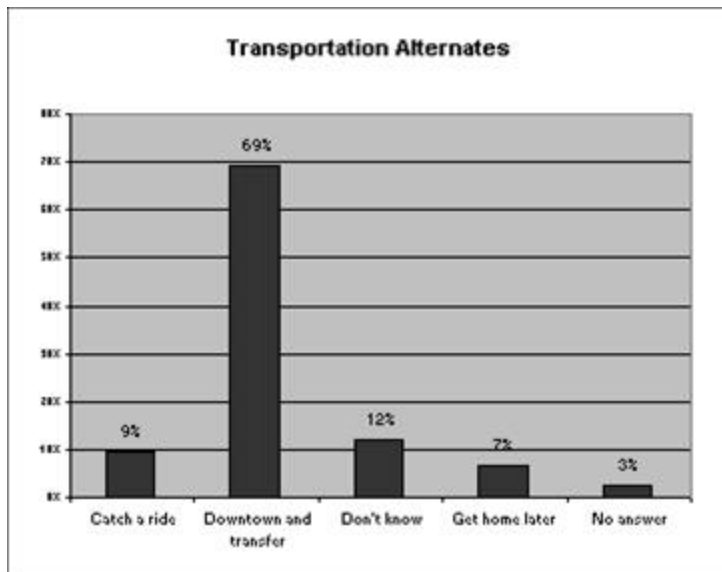
Question 3 (cont.) If this isn't your usual reason for riding the bus, why do you usually ride this bus?



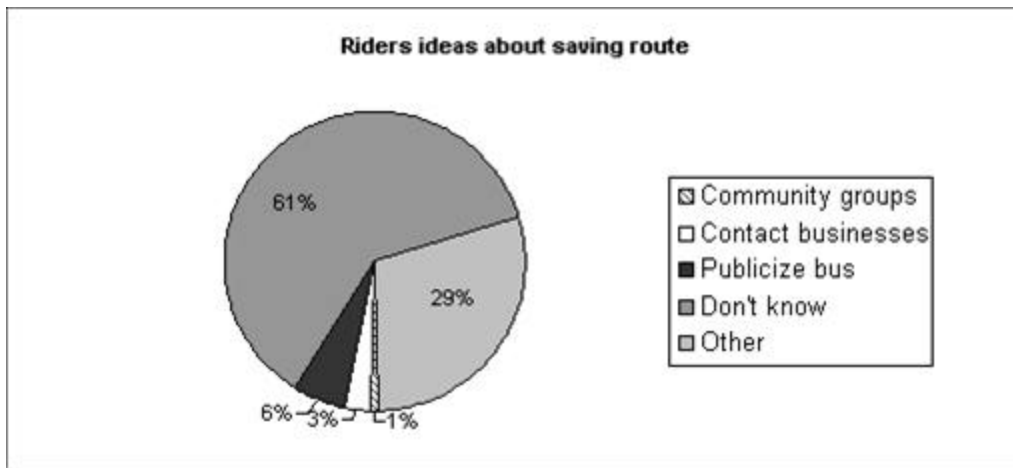
Question 4: How does the change to hourly service (instead of every 40 minutes) affect you?



Question 5: How would you get to where you need to go if this bus route were not available?



Question 6: What do you think we can do to try and save the busline?



## DEMOGRAPHICS OF RIDERSHIP

